

Housing regeneration in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities of South Africa

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Abstract

The South African Government since 1994 has initiated and implemented several housing delivery programmes and subsidy mechanisms to eliminate the incidence of ‘slum housing’ and its associated poverty. In addition to high levels of unemployment, there is also a widely acknowledged need for housing and municipal infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage, streets, stormwater drainage, electricity, and refuse collection. However, the provision of adequate housing for the poor to reduce poverty and improve the quality of people’s life has been a huge challenge for the South African Government over the years. The high level of unemployment and relatively low average wage level contribute to a major housing affordability problem in South Africa. The high unemployment rate forces many people to live in unstructured settlements; hence the need for housing regeneration, as city regeneration has become a critical concern for the South African Government. The objective of this paper is to study the process of housing regeneration through the upgrading and eradication of informal settlements in Tshwane metropolitan municipality (TMM), Gauteng Province South Africa. The paper assess the lessons and challenges that can be learnt through housing regeneration programmes in Tshwane metropolitan municipality. The paper closes with recommendations on how housing regeneration can be improved.

Keywords: Housing regeneration, informal settlement upgrading, Tshwane metropolitan municipality, South Africa

Introduction

Regeneration is commonly used to describe an infinite number of activities across spaces and places which aim to bring about a better future for people and communities. Be it major infrastructure and structural investment, renewing an urban inner city area, refurbishing houses or altering the desires of an ostracised group of people, this is all termed regeneration (Glossop 2008). Likewise, the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (2006) suggests that regeneration is the renewal, revival, revitalisation or transformation of a place or community. It is a response to decline, or degeneration. Regeneration is both a process and an outcome. It can have physical, economic and social dimensions; however, the three commonly co-exist since no meaningful form of regeneration can exist without a physical transformation of the environment in conjunction with economic transition and social change. When a typical regeneration agenda is considered in its original form, the potential outcomes are multi-faceted, as outcomes could lead to: development of the built environment in the form of informal settlement upgrading of core slum areas; personal and community health; increased opportunities; increased equality; increased community safety; increased quality of life; increased social inclusion; lifelong learning; community development; and economic and

sustainable development. In addition, regeneration is a process of land redevelopment in areas of previous moderate to high density urban land use, related to the development level of each country (Dimopoulou, 2009). In South Africa, regeneration projects revitalize city centres, upgrade informal settlements, and implement initiatives to improve the quality of the environment and promote a return to the city. Moreover, regeneration's effect on housing renewal and infrastructure is a subject of intense debate, since it involves the relocation of people in the case of informal settlement upgrading, and the reclaiming of private property in the case of city-initiated development projects.

The primary aims of housing regeneration is to establish an enabling and profitable environment in areas that have seen substantial decay and decline, to uplift neighbourhoods in previously disadvantaged areas (Reid, 2010) and – most importantly for Tshwane metropolitan municipality (TMM) in South Africa. For instance, many South African informal settlement areas and inner cities are receiving increased attention as areas that have experienced severe urban decline over time, and are in dire need of regeneration. This decline is often the result of several factors including poor planning decisions, poor urban management, rapid racial transition, rural urban migration and capital flight. Based on these factors, the regeneration focus in the new South African state has been on building or rebuilding cities, upgrading informal settlements and creating infrastructure to adequately integrate human and economic activities. Hence, this has escalated the development of targeted strategies and interventions that facilitate public infrastructure development as a means of improving these environments and leveraging private sector investment. Decades of apartheid in South Africa (based on official racial discrimination) subdued most practical forms of regeneration initiative, including those relating to housing and infrastructure development. It was only after the end of apartheid and the start of the transformation era in 1990 did such activity begin to emerge to any significant degree. Likewise, it is crucial to note that, in the South African context, housing and infrastructure development is motivated by awful levels of poverty, underutilization of human potential, and the need to address the country's apartheid legacy, as well as the common internationally accepted motives of employment growth and wealth creation in response to factors such as de-industrialization and global competition (Nel and McQuaid, 2009). It is within these contexts and in the light of the country's history that regeneration initiatives particularly on Informal Settlement Upgrading are usually situated and pursued. In the South African Government, there is an acute awareness that housing and infrastructure creation brings added value to the regeneration agenda and vice versa. The regeneration agenda is very broad, and housing can play a pivotal role from many different perspectives.

The role of housing and infrastructure development in helping to promote regeneration in the Tshwane metropolitan municipality (TMM) urban space is receiving considerable attention. Housing is often viewed as a barometer for the state of the economy in South Africa, and this is certainly the case at the moment. Scholars have argued that insufficient provision of housing and infrastructure is at the heart of numerous other problems, either in terms of the economy or society at the neighbourhood or community level. Likewise, it has also been recognised that the connections between housing, infrastructure and other areas of the economy could be used positively to produce beneficial effects when the right processes are applied. The connection between housing, infrastructure and economic performance, however, operates at a number of spatial levels. In recent years, policy makers and political leaders at the local and national level have made stronger links between housing, infrastructure and economic development – particularly at the local level – in South Africa. It is equally important, however, to understand that housing particularly is not just a numbers game, and the capacity of any government to deliver housing of the right type, in the right place, and to an acceptable standard, is essential to

the economic health of cities and their surrounding regions, and to the national economy (Gibb, O'Sullivan and Glossop, 2008). Too often in South Africa, urban housing development and informal settlement upgrading has taken place in isolation from the wider context, for instance by neglecting the sound incorporation of infrastructure development. The way in which housing creation and informal settlement upgrading and integration impact on the economic performance of any nation can be summarised in three broad headings: labour markets, infrastructure, and business and enterprise. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to raise questions about housing regeneration through the upgrading and eradication of informal settlements in Tshwane metropolitan municipality (TMM). The paper particularly investigates the challenges and lessons that can be learnt through the upgrading of housing in TMM being one of the mega municipalities in the Gauteng Province of South Africa- the economic hub of the nation. The paper closes with recommendations on how housing regeneration can be improved.

Housing regeneration in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality

Tshwane, also referred to as the City of Tshwane is a metropolitan municipality that forms the local government of northern Gauteng Province, South Africa and includes the city of Pretoria. The City of Tshwane is the capital of the Republic of South Africa. The economy of Tshwane is dominated by the government sector. The growth of the economy is a result of the manufacturing (mainly automotive) industry (South African Cities Network, 2004). The metropolitan municipality covers an area of 6,368km² and a population of just over 2.5 million. Tshwane is the third largest city in the world in terms of land mass, after New York and Yokohama in Tokyo (South African Cities Network, 2011). Just like Johannesburg, Tshwane is faced with the problem of informal settlement as a large proportion of the migrant population is poor and unable to access the formal urban economy. Likewise, informal settlements are experiencing significant growth in and around Tshwane. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 500,000 households in Tshwane live in informal dwellings.

Most informal settlements in Tshwane are located in the northern part of the metropolitan area. In contrast to the other municipal cities in South Africa, apart from the City of Cape Town, Tshwane was the first metropolitan area to undertake a detailed socio-economic survey of their informal settlements, capturing family size, household head, and origin in order to understand the pattern of movement. During the above survey, the main driving factor contributing to an increasing number of households in informal settlements was found to be urbanization which is expected to continue into the future. This factor goes hand-in-hand with rising unemployment in rural areas and continued marginalisation of the disadvantaged urban poor. The City of Tshwane acknowledges that this has a real impact on the ability of the urban poor to pay for housing-related service charges and rates, and on the financial capacity of the affected local government to provide basic services (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2004).

Tshwane's City Council's priority is to upgrade informal settlements rather than to establish new housing developments. This poses a problem in that most informal settlements came about without any consideration for natural, environmental, and geotechnical conditions, mineral rights and service routing (Huchzermeyer, 2004). But where settlements necessitate relocation, the municipality seeks developable land nearby. As part of its regeneration Strategy, the City of Tshwane has a Water and Sanitation Programme, which has been developed to address some informal settlements through 'in situ phased development', if the location of the settlement and the ground conditions and other factors support the approach (City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, 2004).

The City of Tshwane has developed different strategic and operational approaches to addressing informal settlements, depending on the suitability of the occupied land for development. The first approach is in situ upgrading, which involves (Huchzermeyer et al., 2004):

- Planning innovatively for densification and for internal relocations if possible, should the need arise.
- Collaboration between different municipal departments and provincial bodies to secure delivery of water, sanitation, solid waste removal, local economic development and consumer education.
- Securing of new sites, in order to limit new land invasions, and ensure orderly service delivery.
- Involving the relevant authorities in the North West Province (Tshwane is a cross-border municipality) to make sure they also understand and share strategic visions and operational principles.

The second approach in its regeneration programmes for informal settlements applies to unsuitably occupied land, which mostly leads to relocation. Before relocation, the following actions are undertaken:

- Curbing the expansion of informal settlements that are earmarked for relocation.
- Preventing the formation of new settlements.
- Establishing administrative functions to co-ordinate the City's responses and provide a single point of interface with communities.
- Providing emergency standpipes, latrines, and refuse removal as minimum services before the relocation.
- Addressing areas at risk.

Tshwane municipality has a degree of flexibility in terms of standards. Though the City adopts 'acceptable' standards for infrastructure, such as roads and plot size, experience shows that not all standards can be treated flexibly. For instance, in the provision of water and sanitation, the prescribed standards are applied. Also, the City of Tshwane is currently constructing roads in the northern/cross boarder section of the city to stimulate development. The City's main challenge is how to make the northern areas, which are dominated by informal settlements, and labelled through strong perceptions of crime, more attractive? The City's approach is to turn this around slowly and to enable local economic development through: tarring of roads; development of strategic connections in the road network; encouragement of mixed income areas, so as to create areas that will protect the banks' investments in commercial developments; and inclusion of parks and electrification in recent housing programmes (Huchzermeyer, 2004).

Challenges of informal settlement upgrading in Tshwane metropolitan municipality (TMM)

The tone of the Gauteng Provincial Government's under which the TMM is based, is the campaign against informal settlement and informal house construction by the poor suggests that it is dealing with a sinister, undesirable, pathological and criminal process (Huchzermeyer, 2009). Terminology otherwise applied to life-threatening epidemics and violent crime is officially used, such as: 'eradication', 'elimination'; and 'zero tolerance' (City of Johannesburg,

2002). This aligns with the continued fixation with orderly and segregated development in South African cities (Huchzermeyer 2003, 2009).

Informal settlement ‘eradication’ is often justified with reference to the normatively inappropriate ‘Cities Without Slums’ campaign of the Cities Alliance, a joint programme of UN-Habitat and the World Bank, also incorporated into the Millennium Development Goals (UN-Habitat, 2003). The South African Minister of Housing was quoted in the media as stating that the country’s plan to ‘eradicate’ informal settlements by 2014 is in line with United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Palitza, 2005). Internationally, Millennium Development Goal Target 7 is increasingly referred to as the ‘Cities without Slums’ target (Huchzermeyer 2009). Its official target of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (UNDP 2000), if reached, which is widely acknowledged to be unlikely (UN-Habitat, 2005), would affect only 10 per cent of the world’s growing slum population of the year 2000, and would not achieve the ‘Cities without Slums’ campaign of the Cities Alliance. The South African Government interprets the Millennium Development Goals to mean eradication of slums, rather than improvement of the lives of those living in them.

The following is a summary of the challenges encountered in the upgrading of informal settlement in the Tshwane:

- Budgetary constraints both from the National Department of Human Settlement as well as municipality funding for bulk services and internal services top-ups means a long waiting time for most settlements.
- Land legal issues relating to complex statutory land assembly processes.
- High settlement densities making conventional servicing difficult and usually resulting in significant relocations.
- Lack of bulk services infrastructure in many areas.
- Relocation issues such as:
 - Most relocation and eradication initiatives were not well planned and have resulted in worse living conditions due to the distance of the relocation sites from livelihoods.
 - Disruption of social networks, livelihoods and schooling and even in some cases access to basic necessities such as water and shelter.
- Most developers have been reluctant to work on projects involving informal settlements.
- Lack of classifications for different settlement types and finite definition of a slum or slums.
- A huge implementation gap in terms of progressive legislation, with finances and technical skills lacking.
- Limited capacity building at the local level for integrated and participatory planning, requiring dedicated capacity building on the part of the national and provincial government. This therefore inhibits progress with project implementation.
- Eradication in most cases is a housing right violation as seen from a number of cases.
- Lack of communication at all three tiers of government with the informal settlement dwellers thus making the progress of TMM to be slow, and in most cases non-existence.

Lesson learned

A number of important and valuable lessons have been learned with respect to the upgrading of informal settlement or in situ upgrades of informal settlements in the Tshwane metropolitan

municipalities. These can be summarised as follows and can be used as a basis for formulating new strategies and approaches:

- Housing and infrastructure are typically prioritised and dealt with in isolation from other important supports or interventions such as economic development, health care, crime prevention, education and food security.
- Conventional informal upgrading strategies have resulted in a large number of relocations. Hence utilising this strategy on the remaining informal settlements would result in a large scale relocation of the dwellers to poorly located, peripheral areas. Such a strategy would probably not be workable or sustainable, and as such government should adhere to the policy document for better implementation of the informal settlement upgrading programme.
- Informal settlement upgrading / transformation is not viewed holistically and is usually not dealt with in an integrated fashion.
- Servicing costs are generally 40-60 per cent higher than greenfield development.
- Formal tenure arrangements with respect to the disposal of sites are not adhered to and sites are sold and resold on the informal market.
- Consolidation (giving previous beneficiaries of serviced stands, financed by the previous housing dispensation the opportunity to acquire houses) and the incremental development of sites by beneficiaries were far greater where a higher level of servicing was installed.
- The number of non-South Africans residing in informal settlement sites in TMM is on the increase to the extent that a number of projects would not be viable in terms of the qualifying criteria.

The scale of the informal settlements regeneration in Tshwane is visible for all to see. The informal settlement upgrading Programme as adopted by the IDPs of TMM is considered a success as it has achieved near universal basic servicing since the inception of the programmes, thereby discharging the City's legal obligation to provide basic services to the poor. TMM informal settlement upgrading programme is a component of their Housing Strategies, while the Water and Sanitation Programme, where conditions permit, addresses informal settlements through in situ phased development. However, the extent to which this Programme can contribute to poverty alleviation, social inclusion and reduction of vulnerability is limited by the scale of regeneration.

Conclusions

This research has shown that the TMM faces considerable constraints during the implementation of its regeneration programme. Many of these snags as identified could be avoided or overcome in the short term, but will continue on into future upgrading interventions. However, the new process of an all-inclusive upgrading (housing and infrastructure creation) will result in a lasting regeneration and sustainability. The research also found that though housing and infrastructure are typically prioritised, they in most cases were dealt with in isolation from other important support elements or interventions such as economic development, health care, crime prevention, education and food security. Likewise, the conventional informal upgrading strategies of eradication have resulted in a large number of relocations. Hence the need for a regeneration plan that will prevent the ills related to such systems. Consequently, the governments of TMM are adhering to the policy document for better implementation of the informal settlement upgrading programme, which is intended to make the settlements sustainable.

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